



Universidad  
del Valle



Cuadernos de  
Administración

Journal of Management

Print ISSN: 0120-4645 / E-ISSN: 2256-5078 / Short name: cuad.adm.

Pages: 138-151 / Vol: 36 / Issue: 68 / Sep. - Dec. 2020

Faculty of Administration Sciences / Universidad del Valle /  
Cali - Colombia

## The role of family dynamics and culture in the psychological ownership of family shareholders in family businesses

El papel de la dinámica y cultura familiar en la propiedad psicológica de los accionistas  
familiares en empresas familiares

<sup>1</sup> **María Piedad López Vergara**

Professor, General Management Department, INALDE Business School, Universidad de La Sabana, Chía, Colombia  
e-mail: [maria.lopez@inalde.edu.co](mailto:maria.lopez@inalde.edu.co)

<sup>2</sup> **Isabel C. Botero Laverde**

Associate Professor and Director, Family Business Center, University of Louisville, Kentucky, USA  
e-mail: [isabel.botero@louisville.edu](mailto:isabel.botero@louisville.edu)

<sup>3</sup> **Diógenes Lagos Cortés**

Researcher, INALDE Business School, Universidad de La Sabana, Chía, Colombia  
e-mail: [diogenes.lagos@inalde.edu.co](mailto:diogenes.lagos@inalde.edu.co)

---

Article of Scientific and Technological Research

Submitted: 22/05/2020

Reviewed: 27/07/2020

Accepted: 19/10/2020

Thematic lines: Administration and Organizations

JEL classification: M10, L20, M14

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25100/cdea.v36i68.9786>

---

### Abstract

The purpose of this work is to understand the role of family dynamics and culture in the development of psychological ownership of family shareholders. A qualitative and exploratory approach was used based on the study of 14 cases of Colombian shareholders and 5 cases of Finnish shareholders. The results show that family dynamics create opportunities to a) align expectations of the family concerning the business; b) improve communication between family members; c) consolidate common values in the family; and d), promote identification with the company. These opportunities foster the intention that family shareholders have to exercise control over the company, invest more time in it and, therefore, obtain a better understanding of it, which promotes the development of psychological ownership. When the two contexts were compared, it was found that the level of collectivism and individualism in each culture permeates the opportunities generated by family dynamics. In this sense, similarities were found regarding the alignment of expectations, communication, and interaction between family members, and identification with the company. On the other hand, it was observed that the dynamics that promote identification with the company through

---

<sup>1</sup> Political Scientist, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Doctor in Economics and Business Administration, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland.

<sup>2</sup> Social communicator and journalist, Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia, Doctor in Communication, Michigan State University, USA.

<sup>3</sup> Business administrator, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Colombia, Doctor in Administrative Sciences, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina.

parents' messages and the handling of different opinions generate a favorable environment that encourages psychological ownership in the Colombian case, but not in the Finnish one.

**Keywords:** Psychological ownership, Family shareholders, Family dynamics, Family business, Culture.

## Resumen

El objetivo de este trabajo es entender el rol de las dinámicas familiares y la cultura en el desarrollo de la propiedad psicológica en accionistas familiares. Se usó un enfoque cualitativo y exploratorio basado en el estudio de 14 casos de accionistas colombianos y 5 finlandeses. Los resultados muestran que las dinámicas familiares crean oportunidades para: a) alinear expectativas de la familia frente a la empresa; b) mejorar la comunicación entre miembros de la familia; c) consolidar valores comunes en la familia; y d) promover la identificación del accionista con la empresa. Estas oportunidades promueven la intención que tienen los accionistas familiares de ejercer control sobre la empresa, invertir más tiempo en la misma y, por lo tanto, obtener un mejor conocimiento de ella, lo cual promueve el desarrollo de la propiedad psicológica. Cuando se compararon los dos contextos, se encontró que el nivel de colectivismo e individualismo en cada cultura permea las oportunidades generadas por las dinámicas familiares. En este sentido, se encontraron similitudes en cuanto a la alineación de las expectativas, la comunicación e interacción entre los miembros de la familia y la identificación con la empresa. De otra parte, se observó que las dinámicas que promueven la identificación hacia la empresa por medio de los mensajes de los padres y el manejo de opiniones distintas generan un ambiente propicio que incentiva la propiedad psicológica en el caso colombiano más no en el finlandés.

**Palabras clave:** Propiedad psicológica, Accionistas familiares, Dinámicas familiares, Empresa familiar, Cultura.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, family business researchers have begun to explore psychological ownership feelings (PSO) and its effects on the business. Understanding PSO is important given that it can affect the attitudes and behaviors that individuals have towards a company and, consequently, it can affect their individual and group performance (Lee, Makri, and Scandura, 2019; Liu, Chow, Zhang, and Huang, 2019; Martinaityte, Unsworth, and Sacramento, 2020). PSO refers to ownership feelings that

a person experiences towards something material or immaterial (Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks, 2001).

Research on PSO in the family business has focused on understanding the effects that PSO feelings have on the behaviors and attitudes of non-family employees towards the family business. In general terms, such studies have found that PSO feelings in non-family members are related to their commitment to the organization, to their satisfaction with their work, and their intentions to leave (Bernhard and O'Driscoll, 2011; Hensen, 2012; Mustafa, Ramos, and Man, 2015; Savolainen and Kansikas, 2013; Sieger, Bernhard, and Frey, 2011; Zhu, Chen, Li, and Zhou, 2013). Although previous studies have shown that PSO is important in the context of the family business, there are two issues that have not received much attention. First, most of the research on PSO in family businesses has focused on the feelings of non-family stakeholders (Mustafa, Martin, and Hughes, 2016; Van Wyk and Adonisi, 2012). Although these stakeholders are important, the literature suggests that the highest PSO feelings that family members have towards the family business is the binding force between the family and the business (Bernhard and Jaskiewicz, 2011). In this sense, recent studies have found that the PSO of family members affects factors such as the capacity for innovation (Pittino, Martínez, Chirico and Galván, 2018; Rau, Werner and Schell, 2019), and impacts on the feelings of PSO of non-family employees (Lee *et al.*, 2019; Zhu, Zhang, Han, and Huang, 2018). Second, most of the research has also focused on the consequences of PSO and less attention has been paid to the understanding of factors that can contribute to the development of PSO in family businesses.

This work addresses these problems through two objectives. On the one hand, understanding the role of family dynamics in the development of PSO of family shareholders in family businesses (that is, family members who own the company and are linked to the business as managers or members of the board of directors). For this, we explore the following research question: How do family dynamics contribute to the development of PSO of family shareholders in family business? Understanding the above

is important given that the feelings and behaviors of family shareholders have a great influence on strategic and equity decisions, which can affect factors such as performance and continuity of the family business, the family unit, as well as the commitment of other members to the company (Astrachan, Klein, and Smyrnios, 2002; Eddleston and Morgan, 2014; Kotlar and De Massis, 2013; Sharma and Irving, 2005).

On the other hand, this work seeks to understand the role of culture in the development of PSO. Previous studies indicate that culture affects the way in which people define themselves (Erez and Earley, 1993), and the manner in which they determine what is their own (Pierce *et al.*, 2001). The knowledge available on these companies corresponds mainly to literature developed in North America and Europe (De Massis, Sharma, Chua, and Chrisman, 2012) and, to a large extent, such studies have been carried out in a single country. This approach is problematic given that it prevents the understanding of similarities and differences in PSO feelings between countries. In this sense, we use a sample with Colombian and Finnish shareholders to explore the following research question: How does culture influence the development of PSO in Colombian and Finnish family shareholders in family businesses?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Psychological ownership

In the organizational context, PSO is a phenomenon in which an employee develops feelings of possession over an objective (Van Dyne and Pierce, 2004). It is often defined as a “state in which individuals feel that the objective of property (tangible or immaterial), or a part of this objective, is theirs” (Pierce *et al.*, 2001, p. 299). Literature identifies two types of PSO, one based on the organization, and the other on work (Mayhew, Ashkanasy, Bramble, and Gardner, 2007). The former “has to do with the feelings of possession and psychological connection of individual members with an organization as a whole” (Mayhew *et al.*, 2007, p. 478); while the latter “is related to the feelings of possession

towards their particular jobs” (Mayhew *et al.*, 2007, p. 478).

According to Pierce *et al.* (2001), there are three factors that contribute to the development of PSO in organizations, namely: 1) control over the objective; 2) level of knowledge of the objective; and 3) investment of oneself in the objective. The extent to which an individual feels they have control over an organization is directly related to their ownership feelings towards it (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton, 1981). The amount of information that individuals have about an organization can also affect the feelings towards it; the more information a deeper relationship can develop between them and the object, leading to stronger feelings of ownership towards it (Pierce *et al.*, 2001). Lastly, the degree in which an individual invests time and efforts in a business also plays a role in the development of PSO feelings. People often feel they own what they create, therefore, the extent to which an individual invests time, efforts, energy, or attention towards a goal will greatly influence the sense of ownership toward that goal (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton, 1981).

### 2.2. Family Dynamics and PSO in family businesses

Family businesses are organizations run by members of one or more families, aimed at contributing to the growth of that legacy through generations (Chua, Chrisman, and Sharma, 1999). This type of companies is an important context to understand how the feelings of PSO develop, since the interaction between family and business systems in these companies is manifested. Studies have found that such interactions generate family dynamics that have an influence on the company’s performance and family unity (Astrachan, 2010).

In this document, family dynamics are understood as those experiences that family members share together as a family in relation to the business. Family dynamics have an influence on the objectives, entrepreneurial activities, the company’s succession process, and on the family’s decisions with regard to the business (Astrachan *et al.*, 2002; Chrisman,

Chua, and Sharma, 2005; Hanson, Hessel, and Danes, 2019; Zellweger and Dehlen, 2012). Non-economic objectives present in family dynamics affect decisions on resources and on the company's performance (Gómez-Mejía, Haynes, Núñez-Nickel, Jacobson, and Moyano-Fuentes, 2007). The sharing of values and beliefs among family members is part of those non-economic objectives that regulate behavior among its members and provide guidance in decision-making. They are a pillar for the continuity of the family business (Kotlar and De Massis, 2013).

Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks (2003) suggest that the characteristics of a context affect the development of PSO. In this sense, sharing assumptions and values is a family dynamic that characterizes family businesses (Tàpies and Moya, 2012), helps in the decision-making process, guiding daily and long-term activities and contributing to the success of the family business (Distelberg and Sorenson, 2009; Koiranen, 2002).

The social learning theory states that people learn by observing and imitating the behaviors of others, as well as by the consequences of those behaviors (Bandura, 1977). This theory has been used to address the people's cognitive social development, the behaviors learned during the observation process, and the development of personal skills to achieve the objectives in organizations (Wood and Bandura, 1989). According to this theory, personal factors such as cognitive processes and social factors that are manifested in behavior and the environment, shape a person's learning process (Bandura, 1977). The social learning theory allows us to understand how behaviors are learned by observation and imitation in a family context and, in turn, how such family environment influences individual behaviors. For example, one of the objectives of the family business is to transmit a legacy to future generations. In this sense, whatever is built by the family through the company is also a legacy that is transmitted (Hammond, Pearson, and Holt, 2016; Lumpkin, Brigham, and Moss, 2010). Therefore, the social learning theory allows us to understand how behaviors and family dynamics are learned and transmitted; the latter is a fundamental aspect when building a family legacy.

Following this logic, the experiences that shareholders share with each other as family members in relation to the business and among themselves (derived from family dynamics) can affect the development of PSO, since different family members learn positive or negative behaviors towards the company that could affect the desire to exercise control over the company, invest time and know it. Considering that there is no current research in this area, and given the exploratory nature of this study, the following research question was made: *How does family dynamics contribute to the development of PSO of family shareholders in family businesses?*

### 2.3. Culture and PSO in family businesses

Family businesses differ in many ways (Chua, Chrisman, Steier, and Rau, 2012). These variations are the result of family dynamics that have an influence on the business (Barnett and Kellermanns, 2006), and of cultural differences. Culture plays an important role in the feelings of ownership that individuals experience, since it influences the way in which those individuals define themselves (Erez and Earley, 1993), as well as in the manner in which they learn what they feel as their own (Pierce *et al.*, 2001). Hofstede (1994) defines culture as that collective programming of the mind which distinguishes people of one group from those of another group, or others. Research on PSO has been carried out in a single country; this limits the understanding of how culture can affect the development of PSO. This work explores two cultural contexts (Finland and Colombia) with different levels of collectivism and individualism, which can influence the PSO of shareholders towards their company.

Individualism describes the preferences of a social setting where individuals are expected to take care of themselves (Hofstede, 2001). For its part, collectivism describes a social framework in which individuals take care of each other and have a more extended family vision than the nuclear one (Hofstede, 2001). In this sense, Finland and Colombia have a very different cultural orientation in terms of collectivism and individualism. The individualism score is 63 for Finland and 13

for Colombia. These results show Finland as a predominantly individualistic culture, while Colombia is described as a collectivist society (The Hofstede Insights Network, 2019).

This document explains that the levels of individualism and collectivism can affect the development of PSO. Individualism and collectivism can also affect the efforts made by family shareholders for the company and the influence that family dynamics play in the process. Individualistic or collectivist levels of a culture can affect the manner in which individuals perceive exercising control over the company, knowing the company and investing time in it and, consequently, having an influence in the development of PSO. The following research question was asked in an attempt to better understand the role that culture can play in the development of PSO: *How does culture influence the development of PSO of Colombian and Finnish family shareholders in family businesses?*

### 3. Methodology

This work addresses the role of family dynamics and culture in the development of PSO in family shareholders from an exploratory qualitative method (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014), based on the study of multiple cases. The case study is a widely used approach in management research (Yin, 2017), which allows the construction and deepening of theories, and even the use of cases to clarify theoretical constructions (Siggelkow, 2007). The use of this methodology is justified for three reasons: (a) this approach is suitable for the study of psychological processes in organizations (Strike and Rerup, 2016; (b) it is relevant when a hardly explored topic is addressed (Elsbach and Kramer, 2003); and (c) because this study is focused on the theoretical preparation (Lee, Mitchell, and Sablinski, 1999), in order to improve the previous understanding about the role of family dynamics and culture in the development of PSO.

A multiple-case approach was adopted, as it allows comparisons for similarities and differences between cases (Bika, Rosa, and Karakas, 2019), while providing a more general, more reliable and convincing level of theorizing compared to the study of single

cases (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). The unit of analysis was the individual, specifically, the family shareholder. In this sense, 19 cases were used to create theoretical ideas about the role of family dynamics and culture in the development of PSO in family shareholders.

#### 3.1. Instrument and Participants

A semi-structured interview was used to identify the role of family dynamics in the development of PSO in shareholders who are members of the owner family. The two contexts of analysis were selected given the authors' knowledge of family businesses in Colombia and Finland. A convenience sampling was carried out (Patton, 2002) using as inclusion criterion the fact of a shareholder being a family member owning a family business. This sampling technique consists of selecting individuals from the population by the fact that they are accessible, that is, because they are available and belong to the population (Flick, 2018). The theoretical saturation criterion was used to establish the number of cases (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006), that is, the point at which no new and important information is obtained by including another case. In this manner, the interview was applied to 19 family shareholders (14 from Colombia and 5 from Finland). This number is consistent with other studies that indicate that theoretical saturation is reached using between 15 and 20 interviews (MacGillivray, 2010).

Table 1 presents the instrument used. It was prepared based on the works of Pierce et al. (2001), Ward (1988) and Astrachan et al. (2002); 63% of participants being women. As regards generation, 84% of participants belonged to the second generation, 11% to the third generation and, finally, 5% to the fourth generation. 19% of participants were in an age range between 30 and 40 years; 20% between 41 and 50 years; 40% between 51 and 60 years; and 21% between 61 and 70 years. All the interviewees participated in the family business as managers, or as members of the board of directors. 53% held positions in management and in governing bodies at the same time. All participants had an undergraduate degree, while 42% had completed a master's degree.

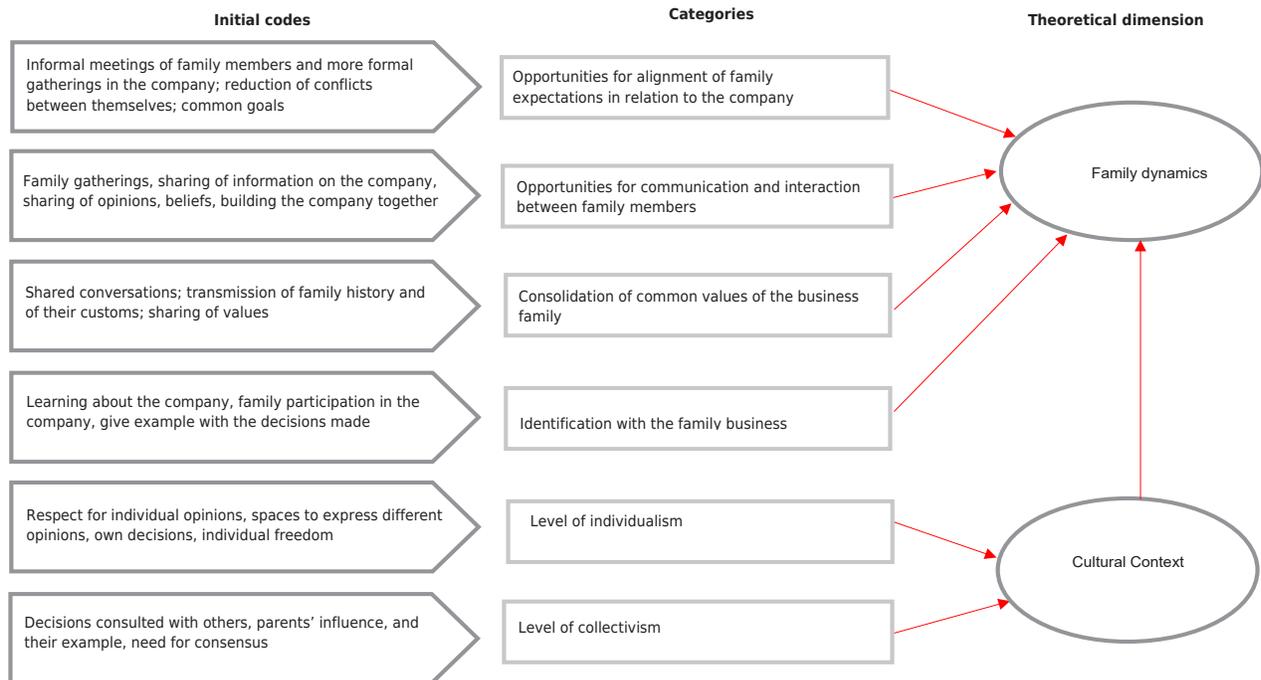
**Table 1. Semi-structured Interview Guide**

<b>Psychological Ownership</b>	
Based on your experience in your family business, please answer the following questions:	
1.	Do you feel that the company is yours?
2.	When you talk about your family business do you use the words “My family business” or “Our family business”? Why?
3.	If you did not have a percentage of ownership in the family business, would you feel that the business is yours? Why?
4.	Do you think you know your family business well? What motivates you to gain more insight into the company?
5.	Do you consider that that you have invested time and efforts in your family business? What motivates you to invest your time and efforts? Why?
6.	Do you think that you have some kind of control in the decision-making process in your family business? What motivates you to exercise that control? Why?
7.	Which factors help strengthen your sense of psychological ownership of your family business? How and why?
8.	Which factors decrease the feeling of psychological ownership you have for your family business? How and why?
<b>Family Dynamics</b>	
Based on your experience in your family business, please answer the following questions:	
9.	Do your family members share the same values with each other? How do you share these values? How do you think this impacts your feelings of psychological ownership?
10.	Are the same values shared between your family and the company? How is this process carried out?
11.	How do you think this impacts your feelings of psychological ownership?
12.	Do you think that your family influences the manner in which the company is run? How? How do you think this impacts your feelings of psychological ownership?
13.	Do you support the decisions your family makes for the future of the family business? How do you support them? How do you think this impacts your feelings of psychological ownership?
14.	What is the focus of your family business: Family first? Business First? Or a balance between family and business? How do you think this impacts your feelings of psychological ownership?
15.	Do you and your family share a family vision? How shared and common is that vision? How do you think this impacts your feelings of psychological ownership?
16.	Do you know what is the family legacy that your family would like to leave to future generations?
17.	How do you think this impacts your feelings of psychological ownership?
18.	How has your experience in the family business contributed to your feelings of psychological ownership?
19.	How do you think values learned at home contribute to feelings of psychological ownership?
20.	How do you think the sharing of views and ideas among family members can contribute to feelings of psychological ownership?
Source: Own preparation based on Pierce <i>et al.</i> (2001), Ward (1988) and Astrachan <i>et al.</i> (2002).	

### 3.2. Analysis of Information

Interviews were transcribed and reviewed using the content analysis technique (Neuendorf, 2016). This technique is appropriate for the study of family businesses, since its purpose is to understand perceptions and feelings in relation to the family business (Berrone, Cruz, and Gomez-Mejia, 2012). The

information was prepared for analysis using data reduction, visualization, categorization, and contextualization techniques (De Massis and Kotlar, 2014). First comes the identification of the information that best answered the research questions (reduction). Second, the information was organized in matrices to identify general themes and possible conclusions (visualization).

**Figure 1. Categories of analysis**

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Third, data were grouped into categories of information, to facilitate comparisons (categorization). These groups were discussed by the researchers to develop a list of common categories in each research question. Finally, based on the information collected in the previous activities, the connections between family dynamics and the development of PSO were identified, as well as the similarities and differences between Colombian and Finnish shareholders.

## 4. Results

The analysis allowed us to group the information into two classes of data that are shown in the code System in Figure 1. The analysis included six categories affecting family dynamics (alignment of expectations, communication, common values, identification with the company, and levels of individualism and collectivism). The results for each group of data are presented below.

### 4.1. Family Dynamics and Psychological Ownership

The first research question explored the role of family dynamics in the development of PSO. Four categories emerged in relation to this question. The first was "alignment of the family members' expectations in relation to the family business". The interviewees indicated that family dynamics, such as informal gatherings and other more formal meetings in the company allowed the creation of spaces to generate this alignment of expectations. The alignment of expectations that family shareholders have towards the company helps to reduce conflicts among themselves, which helps these shareholders perceive and enjoy a sense of family union, which promotes in them the development of the feeling of PSO. Some interviewees highlighted the following:

"When you have good family dynamics it is easier to interact because people have similar goals and objectives; they have a

common vision, and this creates cohesion” (Colombian participant)

“Good family dynamics make it easier for us to interact; we want to work in the company, be here, and be more productive” (Finnish participant)

The above suggests that the alignment of expectations among family shareholders allows them to have a better family harmony, in addition to the feeling that they have a better work environment. This motivates family shareholders to share their opinion, to make decisions, to invest their time in the company, thus gaining more knowledge about it.

The second category is “communication and interaction between family members”. In this sense, family dynamics (such as family gatherings) and the different ways of sharing information, whether written or spoken, promote interaction between family members and allow the generation of spaces for communication and interaction. These communication opportunities help family members understand the views of other members and can help facilitate the decision-making process among shareholders. Here are some thoughts from those interviewed:

“It is easy to think ahead when communication is open, and we share similar beliefs about our family and the business. This makes us want to be together and work together” (Colombian Participant).

“Good communication creates a good connection between family members, and this makes us feel motivated to participate in our company and each one knows that they can make decisions and share them” (Finnish Participant).

These comments point to the general idea that positive communication can create contexts where interactions generate unity and harmony. Family shareholders feel that sharing common interests helps them to contribute ideas and build for the company. This, in turn, generates a desire in the family shareholder to want to invest time. Learn more and make decisions concerning the company because they feel comfortable. In this sense, family dynamics can create situations in which family shareholders develop PSO.

The third category corresponds to “common values that the business family has”. In this sense, family dynamics such as shared conversations, transmission of family history and their customs, allow the creation, sharing and strengthening of values among family members, which in turn generate a space of trust, where shareholders feel empowered to make decisions on relevant issues in the company. These values also enable the creation of common points of view in relation to the business. The interviewees highlighted the following:

“If you don’t share similar values, it may be that your relationship with your family has some difficulty; on the contrary, when we share values, we feel more encouraged to want to be integrated and learn more about our company” (Finnish Participant).

“When we share family values, I feel that I can identify with the company, and it makes me want to know more about our business. This company is part of who I am and is part of our family traditions” (Colombian Participant).

These conversations and spaces for the transmission of values help to create a harmonious environment that invites family shareholders to share time with other family members. This in turn influences their decision to invest their time in the company and, therefore, they acquire more knowledge about it, which leads them to develop PSO feelings.

Lastly, the fourth category corresponds to “identification with the family business”. Family shareholders stated that family dynamics create opportunities to learn more about the company and to share the views that each one has about the company and on the family’s participation in it. At this point, the example, and words that the founding fathers have given to the second and third generations are highlighted. Through their daily actions, these examples of industriousness and love for the company, as well as their thoughts, have become a motivator for these shareholders to want to know and invest time in the business. The opportunity to get to know each other a bit more as a family and as individuals who can contribute to the company’s equity, is also highlighted. Below are some comments that stand out in the interviews:

“Our family dynamics help me create awareness about what I need to learn if I want to contribute to the company; how I can grow as a person; and they help me to see the potential that the company can also offer me for my professional development” (Finnish Participant).

“Our father always told us, this is for you, the company is yours; work and learn so that you can contribute in the future. When they tell you this during your childhood and youth, they strengthen a connection that goes beyond the monetary factor, which is that this company is the history of our family” (Colombian Participant).

The foregoing suggests that the shareholder’s motivation to know and invest time in the business increases to the extent that family dynamics create opportunities to share experiences and gain knowledge about the company and the family itself and, consequently, the willingness to participate in decision-making processes.

#### 4.2. Culture, Family Dynamics, and Psychological Ownership

The second research question explored how culture influences family dynamics that can promote the development of PSO in Colombian and Finnish family shareholders. Similarities and differences were identified in the results. On the one hand, the analysis of the interviews showed similarities between family shareholders in Colombia and Finland in three of the four categories, as follows: (a) alignment of expectations of family members in relation to the family business; (b) communication and interaction between family members; and (c) identification with the family business. Both Colombian and Finnish family shareholders considered that these three opportunities generated by family dynamics motivate them to make decisions about the company, learn more about it, and invest time in it, as indicated by some of the interviewees:

“As long as we work together as one, it is easier to carry out a project because no one is trying to hinder the objectives, as we all understand where we are going and what will make us better” (Finnish Participant).

“Family dynamics are important because they create spaces to respect our differences

and where family members can live and build together; this makes me feel that I want to be here” (Colombian Participant).

According to the foregoing, it was observed that in spite of the differences in the levels of collectivism (Colombia) and individualism (Finland), opportunities created by these family dynamics have a relevant meaning and value in each of these cultures, according to their social framework and the role of individuals in it. Both Colombian and Finnish shareholders experience these dynamics from their cultural context and value them because through the alignment of expectations regarding the business, the possibility of having a better communication with each other and learning more about the company, they feel motivated to take in decision-making, exercising control in some way, investing time in the company, as well as gaining more knowledge of it.

On the other hand, there were differences found between family shareholders of Colombia and Finland with regard to the fourth category: identification with the company through messages that were transmitted by their parents about the business were important for them to feel motivated, to learn more about the company, and thus invest their time in this issue. Due to the level of collectivism present in Colombia where the extended family of an individual continues its relationship with the nuclear family, parents’ influence in adult life continues to be an important factor. For the Finnish sample on the contrary, their interest in knowing the company and investing their time in it was their own decision, without being influenced by their family, given the cultural orientation towards individualism.

Another difference stands out in the interviewees within this category of messages, that is, the importance of having points of view in common. For Colombian shareholders, having points of view in common is a very important factor that helps in family cohesion. This suggests that having different points of view in Colombian culture creates a certain level of conflict, which discourages the willingness to make decisions, invest time in the business and get to know it better. On the contrary, for Finnish family shareholders, having different points of view enriches discussions and creates a

better environment to encourage the fact of wanting to exercise control, investing in, and learning about the company, as indicated by some interviewees:

“I haven’t been forced to be here by my parents, nor by their stories. This is my own election, and I have my own options and opinions” (Finnish participant).

“Sometimes we don’t know how to handle these differences of opinion and that displeases us; we don’t know how to handle the issue” (Colombian participant).

## 5. Conclusion

This research explored the development of PSO feelings in family shareholders in Colombia and Finland, with the aim of understanding the role of family dynamics in the development of a comparative perspective of the Colombian and Finnish cultures. The results suggest that family dynamics and culture play a determining role for the development of PSO in family shareholders, since family shareholders activate their decision to exercise control within the company, invest time in it, and gain a deeper understanding of the business through the following: (a) alignment of expectations of family members in relation to the family business; (b) communication and interaction between family members; (c) the common values that the business family has; and (d) the identification with the family business.

Based on empirical results and theoretical interpretations presented in this study, the conclusion is that family dynamics contribute to the development of PSO feelings in family shareholders, in Colombian and Finnish family businesses, creating spaces and opportunities that are appreciated with a high level of importance in each culture. In accordance with the foregoing, the propositions are:

**P1:** Family dynamics contribute to develop PSO feelings in family shareholders in family businesses.

**P1a:** Family dynamics create opportunities for alignment of expectations, for communication among family members, and for the consolidation of common values of the business family.

**P1b:** Opportunities to align expectations, to communicate, to consolidate common values of the business family and to identify with the company, motivate shareholders of family businesses to exercise control over the company, get to know the company, and invest time in the company.

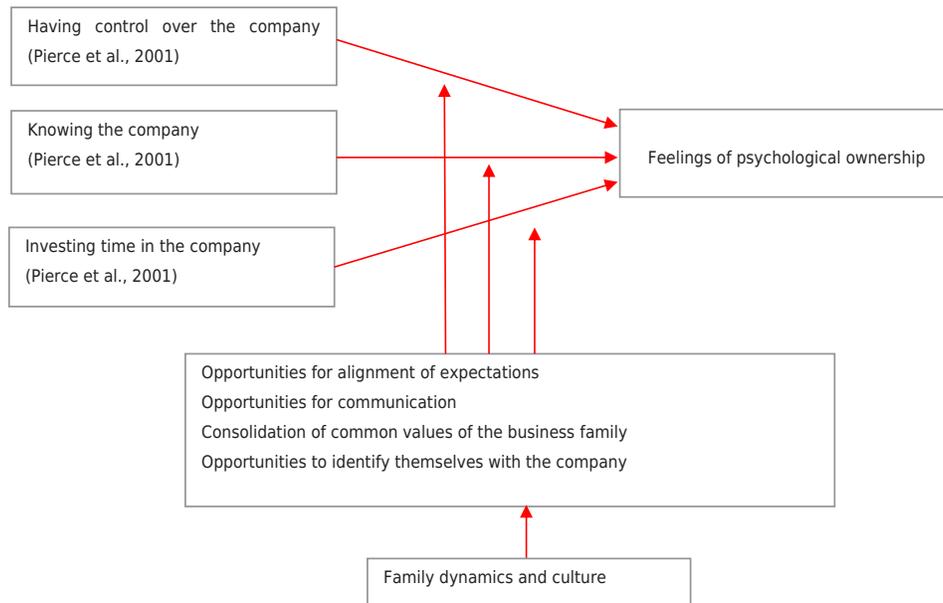
These family dynamics are influenced by the cultural context, specifically by the levels of collectivism and individualism and by the perception that the individual has about what they consider to be their own in the countries studied. The level of individualism, where the individual takes care of himself, makes a difference in the manner in which some family dynamics motivate family shareholders to know more about the company, to invest their time in it, and to exercise control over business decisions, which according to Pierce et al. (2001) are the factors that make up the sentiment of PSO. Accordingly, in Finland the dynamics that generate communication, interaction and alignment with others develop PSO more than those dynamics that focus on avoiding the difference of opinions and those dynamics that influence the freedom of the individual through messages, and stories of the company’s founding fathers. This analysis led to the following propositions:

**P2:** The cultural context influences the generation of family dynamics that promote the development of the feeling of PSO in family shareholders of family businesses.

**P2a:** The level of individualism or collectivism marked by the cultural context influences the way in which shareholders perceive these opportunities to align expectations, to communicate among family members, to consolidate common values of the business family, and to identify with the company.

**P2b:** The level of individualism or collectivism marked by the cultural context influences the motivation that shareholders of family businesses have to exercise control over the company, get to know the company and invest time in the company.

Figure 2 summarizes how family dynamics contribute to the shareholder’s motivation to exercise control, invest their time, and get to know the company, according to the cultural context. This figure integrates the

**Figure 2. Family dynamics and psychological ownership in family shareholders**

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

discussions and propositions previously raised.

Given that research on PSO in family businesses has focused on studies that span a single country (Bernhard and O'Driscoll, 2011; Sieger *et al.*, 2011), this study reinforces the idea that the cultural context of each country is relevant to understand that there are family dynamics that create opportunities for the PSO to develop in family shareholders, and that through a cultural analysis these dynamics may or may not be similar in some cultures (Pierce *et al.*, 2001, 2003). The ability to extend the frontiers of this knowledge and explore this topic in future research will be relevant to obtain an understanding of when family dynamics and cultural context may or may not activate the components of PSO.

In light of previous research that highlights the role of family dynamics in the behavior of family members in the company and in its dynamics (Blanco-Mazagatos, de Quevedo-Puente, and Delgado-García, 2016; Neubaum, 2018), the work herein highlights that the opportunities generated by family dynamics have an influence on family relationships and decisions vis-a-vis the company, and which are transmitted to the family based

on the sharing of values, sayings and actions (Gehman, Trevino, and Garud, 2013), motivating family shareholders to get to know each other, to get to know the business and to exercise control over the firm.

Practical contributions are also derived from the present study. In the analysis of interviews, it was observed that the parents' example influences the manner in which their descendants develop feelings towards the company. Relationships in the family context have an influence on the success of important processes for the family business, such as the succession process (De Massis, Chua, and Chrisman, 2008; Schepker, Kim, Patel, Thatcher, and Campion, 2017). This suggests that the family business owners and shareholders, as well as those who have the responsibility of training the next generations, should try to create opportunities and spaces in which family members can improve their communication with each other, allowing spaces to learn about the company's fundamental aspects. Thus, when there is a better knowledge of the company you can raise more awareness concerning the need to train ourselves as active owners. In this sense, Ward (2006) considers that the family business deserves

to have owners that are committed to the business. In this manner, adequate training as an active owner will allow these family members to have the skills to exercise adequate control over the company, as well as encourage their motivation to invest more time in the company's activities.

This study has two limitations: (a) the size of the sample limits the generalization of results; and (b), the results are based on the individual perception of the interviewees, therefore, future research should contrast these individual perceptions with the perceptions of other members of the same family and, thus, be able to understand PSO in a collective, rather than in an individual manner.

## 6. Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

## 7. Source of Financing

This research is sponsored by INALDE Business School - Universidad de La Sabana and performed by the Family Business research group.

## 8. References

- Astrachan, J. H. (2010). Strategy in family business: Toward a multidimensional research agenda. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 1(1), 6-14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2010.02.001>
- Astrachan, J. H., Klein, S. B., & Smyrnios, K. X. (2002). The F-PEC scale of family influence: A proposal for solving the family business definition problem. *Family Business Review*, 15(1), 45-58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.2002.00045.x>
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0146-6402\(78\)90002-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0146-6402(78)90002-4)
- Barnett, T., & Kellermanns, F. W. (2006). Are we family and are we treated as family? Nonfamily employees' perceptions of justice in the family firm. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(6), 837-854. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2006.00155.x>
- Bernhard, F., & Jaskiewicz, P. (2011). Ownership perceptions in family businesses: Psychological difficulties of the retiring owner-manager (pp. 189-216). In I. Stamm, P. Breitschmid, & M. Kohli (Eds.), *Doing succession in Europe: Generational transfers in family businesses in comparative perspective*. Zurich, Switzerland: Schulthess.
- Bernhard, F., & O'Driscoll, M. P. (2011). Psychological Ownership in Small Family-Owned Businesses: Leadership Style and Nonfamily-Employees' Work Attitudes and Behaviors. *Group & Organization Management*, 36(3), 345-384. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601111402684>
- Berrone, P., Cruz, C., & Gomez-Mejia, L. R. (2012). Socioemotional wealth in family firms: Theoretical dimensions, assessment approaches, and agenda for future research. *Family Business Review*, 25(3), 258-279. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486511435355>
- Bika, Z., Rosa, P., & Karakas, F. (2019). Multilayered socialization processes in transgenerational family firms. *Family Business Review*, 32(3), 233-258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486519827435>
- Blanco-Mazagatos, V., de Quevedo-Puente, E., & Delgado-García, J. B. (2016). How agency conflict between family managers and family owners affects performance in wholly family-owned firms: A generational perspective. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 7(3), 167-177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2016.07.003>
- Chrisman, J. J., Chua, J. H., & Sharma, P. (2005). Trends and directions in the development of a strategic management theory of the family firm. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 29(5), 555-575. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2005.00098.x>
- Chua, J. H., Chrisman, J. J., & Sharma, P. (1999). Defining the family business by behavior. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 23(4), 19-39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104225879902300402>
- Chua, J. H., Chrisman, J. J., Steier, L. P., & Rau, S. B. (2012). Sources of heterogeneity in family firms: An introduction. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 36(6), 1103-1113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2012.00540.x>
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Halton, E. (1981). *The meaning of things: Domestic symbols and the self*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- De Massis, A., Chua, J. H., & Chrisman, J. J. (2008). Factors preventing intra-family succession. *Family Business Review*, 21(2), 183-199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.2008.00118.x>

- De Massis, A., & Kotlar, J. (2014). The case study method in family business research: Guidelines for qualitative scholarship. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 5(1), 15-29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2014.01.007>
- De Massis, A., Sharma, P., Chua, J. H., & Chrisman, J. J. (2012). *Family business studies: An annotated bibliography*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Distelberg, B., & Sorenson, R. L. (2009). Updating systems concepts in family businesses: A focus on values, resource flows, and adaptability. *Family Business Review*, 22(1), 65-81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486508329115>
- Eddleston, K. A., & Morgan, R. M. (2014). Trust, commitment and relationships in family business: Challenging conventional wisdom. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 5(3), 213-216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2014.08.003>
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1), 25-32. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2007.24160888>
- Elsbach, K. D., & Kramer, R. M. (2003). Assessing creativity in Hollywood pitch meetings: Evidence for a dual-process model of creativity judgments. *Academy of Management Journal*, 46(3), 283-301. <https://doi.org/10.5465/30040623>
- Erez, M., & Earley, P. (1993). *Culture, self-identity and work*. New York, USA: Oxford University Press.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Gehman, J., Trevino, L. K., & Garud, R. (2013). Values work: A process study of the emergence and performance of organizational values practices. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1), 84-112. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.0628>
- Gómez-Mejía, L. R., Haynes, K. T., Núñez-Nickel, M., Jacobson, K. J. L., & Moyano-Fuentes, J. (2007). Socioemotional wealth and business risks in family-controlled firms: Evidence from Spanish olive oil mills. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 52(1), 106-137. <https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.52.1.106>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Hammond, N. L., Pearson, A. W., & Holt, D. T. (2016). The quagmire of legacy in family firms: Definition and implications of family and family firm legacy orientations. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 40(6), 1209-1231. <https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12241>
- Hanson, S. K., Hessel, H. M., & Danes, S. M. (2019). Relational processes in family entrepreneurial culture and resilience across generations. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2018.11.001>
- Henssen, B. (2012). "Mine'or'ours"? *Perspectives on psychological ownership in family firms*. (University of Jyväskylä). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1942/21888>
- Hofstede, G. (1994). The business of international business is culture. *International Business Review*, 3(1), 1-14. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0969-5931\(94\)90011-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0969-5931(94)90011-6)
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. California, USA: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede Insights Network. (2019). *Compare countries*. Retrieved from <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/>
- Koiranen, M. (2002). Over 100 Years of Age But Still Entrepreneurially Active in Business: Exploring the Values and Family Characteristics of Old Finnish Family Firms. *Family Business Review*, 15(3), 175-187. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.2002.00175.x>
- Kotlar, J., & De Massis, A. (2013). Goal setting in family firms: Goal diversity, social interactions, and collective commitment to family-centered goals. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 37(6), 1263-1288. <https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12065>
- Lee, T. W., Mitchell, T. R., & Sablinski, C. J. (1999). Qualitative research in organizational and vocational psychology, 1979-1999. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 55(2), 161-187. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1999.1707>
- Lee, K., Makri, M., & Scandura, T. (2019). The effect of psychological ownership on corporate entrepreneurship: Comparisons between family and nonfamily top management team members. *Family Business Review*, 32(1), 10-30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486518785847>
- Liu, F., Chow, I. H.-S., Zhang, J.-C., & Huang, M. (2019). Organizational innovation climate and individual innovative behavior: exploring the moderating effects of psychological ownership and psychological empowerment. *Review of Managerial Science*, 13(4), 771-789. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-017-0263-y>

- Lumpkin, G. T., Brigham, K. H., & Moss, T. W. (2010). Long-term orientation: Implications for the entrepreneurial orientation and performance of family businesses. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 22(3-4), 241-264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985621003726218>
- Neubaum, D. O. (2018). Family business research: Roads travelled and the search for unworn paths. *Family Business Review*, 31(3), 259-270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486518792948>
- Rau, S. B., Werner, A., & Schell, S. (2019). Psychological ownership as a driving factor of innovation in older family firms. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 10(4), 100246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2018.03.001>
- Savolainen, S., & Kansikas, J. (2013). Non-family employees in small family business succession: The case of psychological ownership. *World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*, 9(1), 64-81. <https://doi.org/10.1504/WREMSD.2013.050936>
- Schepker, D. J., Kim, Y., Patel, P. C., Thatcher, S. M., & Campion, M. C. (2017). CEO succession, strategic change, and post-succession performance: A meta-analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 28(6), 701-720. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.03.001>
- Sharma, P., & Irving, P. G. (2005). Four bases of family business successor commitment: Antecedents and consequences. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 29(1), 13-33. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2005.00067.x>
- Sieger, P., Bernhard, F., & Frey, U. (2011). Affective commitment and job satisfaction among non-family employees: Investigating the roles of justice perceptions and psychological ownership. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 2(2), 78-89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2011.03.003>
- Siggelkow, N. (2007). Persuasion with case studies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1), 20-24. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2007.24160882>
- Strike, V. M., & Rerup, C. (2016). Mediated sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(3), 880-905. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2012.0665>
- Tàpies, J., & Moya, M. (2012). Values and longevity in family business: evidence from a cross-cultural analysis. *Journal of Family Business Management*, 2(2), 130-146. <https://doi.org/10.1108/20436231211261871>
- Van Dyne, L., & Pierce, J. L. (2004). Psychological ownership and feelings of possession: Three field studies predicting employee attitudes and organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(4), 439-459. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.249>
- Van Wyk, R., & Adonisi, M. (2012). Antecedents of corporate entrepreneurship. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 43(3), 65-78. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajbm.v43i3.475>
- Ward, J. L. (1988). The special role of strategic planning for family businesses. *Family Business Review*, 1(2), 105-117. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.1988.00105.x>
- Ward, J. L. (2006). *El éxito en los negocios de familia*. Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Norma.
- Wood, R., & Bandura, A. (1989). Social cognitive theory of organizational management. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(3), 361-384. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258173>
- Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research: Design and methods* (6th ed.). California, USA: Sage Publications.
- Zellweger, T. M., & Dehlen, T. (2012). Value is in the eye of the owner: Affect infusion and socioemotional wealth among family firm owners. *Family Business Review*, 25(3), 280-297. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486511416648>
- Zhu, H., Chen, C. C., Li, X., & Zhou, Y. (2013). From personal relationship to psychological ownership: The importance of manager-owner relationship closeness in family businesses. *Management and Organization Review*, 9(2), 295-318. <https://doi.org/10.1111/more.12001>
- Zhu, H., Zhang, P., Han, X., & Huang, T. (2018). Family involvement in management in private businesses and the effect on professional managers' psychological ownership. *Nankai Business Review International*, 9(2), 225-243. <https://doi.org/10.1108/NBRI-08-2017-0043>

### How to cite this paper?

López Vergara, M. P., Botero Laverde, I. C., & Lagos Cortés, D. (2020). The role of family dynamics and culture in the psychological ownership of family shareholders in family businesses. *Cuadernos de Administración*, 36(68), 138-151. <https://doi.org/10.25100/cdea.v36i68.9786>

Cuadernos de Administración journal by Universidad del Valle is under licence Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial-SinObrasDerivadas 4.0. Based in <http://cuadernosdeadministracion.univalle.edu.co/>